

Howard County Land Development Code Update Phase 1: Development Regulations Assessment (2017-2018)

Public Engagement Plan March 23, 2017

Drafting a new Land Development Code is a major undertaking that requires community input and collaboration among a wide range of Howard County stakeholders. The purpose of this strategy document is to outline our suggested approach for citizen engagement throughout Phase One of the project. This is intended to be a working document that may be updated in the future to refine outreach approaches and/or meeting formats as necessary.

Objectives

The Citizen Engagement Strategy for Phase One has four key objectives:

- To solicit input from the stakeholders who use the Zoning, Subdivision and Land Development Regulations and related documents regarding the strengths and weaknesses of those documents and how best to improve them in a new Land Development Code;
- To solicit input from community residents and property owners who may be affected by potential changes in the development regulations, including those who may be less conversant with zoning code issues;
- To inform and educate stakeholders and citizens about emerging practices and zoning and subdivision regulations that may improve the county's ability to achieve its planning goals; and
- To ensure that citizens, stakeholders, code users, public officials, appointed and elected officials have a variety of conduits to convey their input to the County and the Clarion Team.

Communication Approaches

Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) staff and Clarion Associates will use a broad range of approaches to notify key stakeholders and the public about key events and other ways to get involved in phase one of the Land Development Code project.

Periodic Interactive Meetings

Clarion and DPZ staff will facilitate community-wide or area-wide meetings with key stakeholders, elected and appointed officials, and the public at several project milestones. The meeting format may range from public open houses and formal presentations to focus groups on specific topics, and will sometimes incorporate keypad polling to allow participants to express responses to suggested regulations. When the open house format is used, multiple stations will allow participants to focus on specific substantive interests. Smaller group meetings will be held with key citizen and stakeholder groups.



Telephone Interviews

Phone interviews may be held with stakeholders that are unable to attend in-person meetings. Following our initial round of stakeholder meetings and interviews, DPZ staff will identify these individuals and determine their availability for phone calls with Clarion.

Project Website

DPZ will create a page on the County website devoted to the Development Regulation Assessment project. This site will serve as a one-stop shop to learn about upcoming project events and to download draft documents as they become available to the public. The website will be updated on an as-needed basis, including each time a major project document is posted and when upcoming events are planned. The website will also include Frequently Asked Questions and a portal for submitting comments.

Social Media

Documents will be posted on the county's website and promoted through social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. Generally, most posts on social media will link back to the project website to bring traffic to the website, where key project information will be housed.

Online Surveys and Comment Forms

Online surveys will be used in the spring of 2017 as part of the project startup, and again when the public draft Diagnosis and Annotated Outline is made available on the project website. The surveys will specifically solicit feedback from code users and citizens related to the current performance of the County's zoning and subdivision controls, and related to the Diagnosis and Annotated Outline. Comments can also be submitted on-line at any time throughout the life of the project.

Email Blasts through Constant Contact

DPZ will maintain an open-ended list of interested persons and meeting attendees and will send email updates through Constant Contact on a periodic basis. The Constant Contact list will include existing lists within DPZ used for land use or planning activities (such as the *PlanHoward 2030* process), and will grow throughout the project. Emails will be sent when meetings are scheduled and when draft documents are available for review.

Stakeholder Groups

Citizens and stakeholder groups play an important role in the Development Regulation Assessment. The roles of each are summarized in this section.

Citizens

All citizens of Howard County care about the future of the county. Public awareness of the process and engagement of all those who wish to participate is vital. The general public will be engaged throughout the project using the communication methods noted above and the key engagement opportunities noted below.

Community Stakeholders

Clarion and DPZ will schedule meetings with key stakeholders that are familiar with and use the County's development regulations. The following broad list of stakeholder groups will be notified of upcoming meetings and the availability of draft project documents. Other interested groups can request to be included in stakeholder meetings by contacting the DPZ project manager. DPZ will maintain this list of community stakeholders and prepare required mailings or contact lists necessary to keep them informed about the project.

Boards and Commissions

- Agricultural Preservation Board
- Cemetery Preservation Advisory Board
- Design Advisory Panel
- Environmental Sustainability Board
- Historic Preservation Commission

- Housing Commission
- Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission
- Howard County Forestry Board
- Planning Board
- Public Transportation Board

Business and Economic Development

- Downtown Columbia Partnership
- Ellicott City Partnership
- Howard County Chamber of Commerce
- Howard County Economic Development Authority
- Howard County Technology Council
- Office of Tourism and Promotion

Land Development

- Maryland Building Industry Association
- Land development professionals (i.e. consultants, builders, engineers and attorneys)

Other Stakeholder Groups

- Columbia Association
- Farm Bureau
- Howard Community College
- Howard County Conservancy
- Howard County General Hospital
- Howard County Public School System
- Howard Soil Conservation District
- Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory
- Patapsco Heritage Greenway
- Patuxent Reservoirs Watershed Protection
- Sierra Club

Steering Committee

The County will identify and convene a Steering Committee representing a balance of citizen and stakeholder interests. The Steering Committee will serve as a sounding board for ideas, directions, and questions about the project raised by Clarion Associates during the course of its work. The Steering Committee will meet approximately four times between March 2017 and February 2018, approximately once each calendar quarter. The Steering Committee is intended to continue this role throughout phase two of the project.

Core Staff Review Team

The core staff review team is comprised of those who use the planning, zoning, subdivision and land development regulations frequently (including planners, the County attorneys, and other Howard County Departments). This team's responsibilities are to:

- Provide local knowledge of specific conditions, issues, or concerns; and
- Submit comments to the DPZ project manager; and
- Consider the enforceability and administration of the annotated outline; and
- Assist with the technical review of draft Diagnosis and Annotated Outline.

Elected and Appointed Officials

Clarion will prepare regular updates for the Planning Board and/or County Council on an as-needed basis as determined by staff. As appropriate, Clarion will present a summary of any major changes or updates during any of our scheduled trips.

Key Engagement Opportunities

There will be numerous opportunities to engage the public during phase one of the Land Development Regulation Assessment project. Key milestones and opportunities for engagement are listed below. Clarion will work with DPZ to determine whether additional trips, conference calls, or video conferences are necessary for further engagement on specific topics. All dates in this strategy are tentative and may be revised during the course of the project.

Project Kickoff, Stakeholder and Community Meetings – March 28-30, 2017

Clarion will make a 2-3 day visit to Howard County to meet with and interview key stakeholders. The meetings will be arranged by area of expertise and stakeholders will be asked to provide their perspectives on what is wrong (and what is right) with the current land development standards and procedures. Each interview meeting will include a brief description of the project scope, structure, and timeline, presented in either PowerPoint or short handout format. Meeting summaries covering the key points will be available to the public on the project website. Clarion Associates will also present the project scope and solicit input about the County's land development regulations at three evening community meetings in Columbia, Southeast Howard County, and Western Howard County.

Emerging Issues & Tradeoffs Public Meetings – Summer 2017

Additional public meetings will be held to allow for citizen and stakeholder input on key issues as the initial draft of the Diagnosis and Annotated Outline is being developed. Clarion Associates will conduct several community meetings during the summer of 2017 to solicit input. A variety of meeting formats will be used based on group size and interests. These meetings will focus on specific issues or tradeoffs that emerge from the initial project kickoff meetings and first round of online surveys. Citizens and stakeholders will provide input about alternative directions on key issues and this input will be incorporated into the initial draft.

Online Surveys – May-June 2017 and January-February 2018

Two surveys will be available for a period of one month each to allow for feedback from code users and citizens related to (1) the project kickoff meetings, and (2) the draft Diagnosis and Annotated Outline. The surveys will include short background statements for each question, multiple choice questions, and opportunities for open-ended responses. The two surveys will be posted on the project web site along with introductory materials designed to promote use of the surveys, and notices of the availability of the survey will be e-mailed to citizen/stakeholder groups. Paper copies of the surveys will be made available in public libraries and the County Administration Building for those with limited internet access.

Public Draft Public Meetings – January 2018

After the Public Draft is released, Clarion will make a third trip to Howard County to conduct a series of public meetings to present and explain the Diagnosis and Annotated Outline and to answer any questions about the recommendations. These meetings will include 1-3 daytime and evening public meetings as well as a series of group meetings with key citizen/stakeholder groups or combinations of those groups.